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ABSTRACT

This third grade teaching unit on the USSR covers an introduction to the Soviet Union and its people, its government, daily lifestyles, folk culture, and geography. Skill goals deal with telling the difference between facts and opinions, comparing cultures, and integrating and applying information from various topics about the Soviet Union to everyday lives of its people. The attitudinal goal seeks to have students develop a sense of respect for Soviet people as human beings living in an environment different from ours. Behavioral objectives are keyed to each of the unit goals and activities. Activities include analyzing media for stereotypes, brainstorming things students would like to know about the USSR, viewing filmstrips, preparing typical foods, learning folk songs and dances, comparing scenes from Soviet life and American life, writing Congressmen for ideas on achieving better relations, and playing games which help students learn facts. The unit evaluation is based on individual and group work. A five-item annotated bibliography is attached. (JDH)

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The Soviet Union and its People

Third Grade

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4/23/86

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SO 017 441

Content Outline

I. Introduction to the Soviet Union and its People

A. The role of the media in Americans' perceptions of the Soviet Union

B. Distinguishing between facts and opinions about the Soviet Union and its people

II. Government in the Soviet Union

A. What is a government?

B. Characteristics of a Democratic and a Communistic government

C. Effects governments have on our daily lives

III. Lifestyles in the Soviet Union

A. Daily routines/home life

B. The prominent role of sports

C. Vacations for Soviet workers and their families

D. A rigorous educational system

IV. Folk culture in the Soviet Union

A. A typical Russian meal

B. Russian folk song and folk dance

V. Geographical features in the Soviet Union

A. The five regions of the Soviet Union

B. Major cities

C. Important rivers and mountain ranges

D. The ocean and seas surrounding the Soviet Union

E. A land of varying climates

Unit Goals

Knowledge Goals

Learning About:

1. the government of the Soviet Union
2. lifestyles of people in the Soviet Union
3. cultural customs unique to the Soviet people
4. prominent geographical features of the Soviet Union

Attitude and Value Goal

1. Students will develop a sense of respect for Soviet people as human beings living in an environment different from ours.

Skill Goals

1. Telling the difference between facts and opinions (from various sources) about the Soviet Union
2. Comparing aspects of Soviet life with American life
3. Integrating information from various topics about the Soviet Union
4. Applying information about the Soviet Union to everyday lives of its people

Unit Objectives

A. Knowledge Objectives

KG1 1. discuss differences between governments in the United States and the Soviet Union.

KG2 2. orally (and in writing) share with the class information learned about one particular aspect of lifestyles in the Soviet Union.

KG3 3. locate specific geographical regions and features of the Soviet Union on a map.

KG4 4. demonstrate through singing and dancing of Russian folksongs and eating Russian food that the Soviet Union has customs familiar only to their culture.

B. Affective Objectives

AG1 1. discuss similarities between the United States and Soviet people in the way we look, activities we enjoy, and our hopes for a peaceful future.

SG3 AG1 2. write an essay or play a game which integrates information from all areas studied about the Soviet Union. Explain how this information has improved or lessened the student's feelings about the Soviet Union and its people.

C. Skill Objectives

SG1 1. orally distinguish between facts and opinions presented in newspapers, television commercials and movies about the Soviet Union and its people.

KG2 SG2 2. list similarities and differences between lifestyles in the Soviet Union and the United States.

SG3 3. compile a list of relevant questions about people or aspects of life in the Soviet Union to ask a visitor who has been there.

SK4 4. apple knowledge of government in the Soviet Union through discussion in order to understand how its policies affect choices of the Soviet people in everyday life.

Initiating Activities

SO1 A01 1. Bring in newspaper headlines, cite television commercials and popular movies which portray the Soviet Union and its people unfavorably. Ask students how they feel about people from the Soviet Union. After some discussion, ask if anyone knows the difference between facts and opinions. Using the newspaper, television commercials, etc., as examples, explain that we often depend on other peoples' judgments about the Soviet Union and its people. In order to understnad the people from the Soviet Union we have to be careful to separate facts from opinions. Then, explain to students that we will be studying the Soviet Union so that we can form our own opinions about the country and its people. Ask students to write down how they feel about the Soviet Union and its people and why they feel that way.

KO 1-4* 2. While the whole class is together, choose one student randomly and tell the rest of the class to pretend that this person has just moved to Bloomington from the Soviet Union. Ask them to imagine what he's like. Then, ask students to think of some things they would like to know about his life in the Soviet Union. Write each of their questions on the board. Explain that in the next few weeks we will try to answer these questions because we will be studying the Soviet Union and its people.

KO 1,3 3. Tell the class that we are going to begin a unit on a country in the world that is very important to us in the United States. Without saying the name of the country, tell students some hints to help them figure out which country it is. For example, tell

* Could encompass KO 1-4 depending on the questions asked

them:

a. it is the largest country in the world

b. the United States and this country are trying to achieve peace

c. the president of this country is maned Gorbachev

d. the capital is Moscow

Continue with these types of hints until the students guess correctly, or if it becomes tedious, tell them the name of the country is the Soviet Union.

Developmental Activities

S02 1. Show the filmstrip, Lifestyles in the Soviet Union. Afterwards, ask students questions such as:

a. Do the people from the Soviet Union look like you thought they would? Why or why not?

b. Do people in the Soviet Union enjoy any of the same activities that we do in the United States?

After some discussion, ask students to write down at least two similarities and two differences between the Soviet Union and the United States based on the filmstrip.

K01 S04 2. In order to learn about the government of the Soviet Union as compared to ours in the United States, explain to students that we will play a game. Before the game begins, explain (briefly) some characteristics of both a Communistic and a Democratic government. Then, divide the class into two groups. Explain that one side of the room will represent a Democratic form of government, such as we have in the United States, the other side will represent a Communistic form of government, such as the one in the Soviet Union. Then, while the "communists" observe, ask citizens of the democracy to volunteer ten items they would like to have for lunch. Take a vote, (by raise of hands) to select five of the tem items. As citizens of the democracy observe, explain to the communists that one person has been chosen to be their leader. This person will decide their lunch menu. The communist people may either:

a. eat the lunch selected for them, or

b. skip lunch

Discuss this activity in terms of how each group felt when given (or not given) the freedom to make choices. Ask students how leaders of the United States government are chosen. Then, explain the procedure used in the Soviet Union to select government leaders. After some discussion, ask students to think about some other choices or freedoms we have in the United States, such as freedom of worship, freedom of speech, etc. Clarify the fact that people in the Soviet Union have far fewer freedoms than we do.

S03 3. Invite someone to the classroom who has either:

a. been a resident of the Soviet Union, or

b. visited the Soviet Union recently

This will give students a first hand account of what it's really like in the Soviet Union. Prior to the visit, develop a list of questions as a class to ask him/her that would be difficult for us to answer without any actual experiences in the Soviet Union. This will provide more information about the government or lifestyles of people in the Soviet Union.

K04 K01 4. Prepare a meal or dessert that is common in the Soviet Union for everyone in the class to taste. Compare this meal to the food we eat in the United States. Use this activity as a springboard for a discussion on shops, markets, and restaurants in the Soviet Union. Explain that, in the Soviet Union, there are not restaurants such as McDonald's, Pizza Hut, etc. in which local people own the restaurants and make money off the sale of their food. Rather, in the Soviet Union the government owns all restaurants, department stores, factories, etc. Therefore, no individuals earn money; the money goes

to the government.

KO 2 5. Divide the class into five groups. Provide each group with a book or article which discusses one aspect of lifestyles in the Soviet Union. Each group should then read and discuss the article among themselves. Then, as a class we will discuss each topic based on the individual group's information. The teacher should go around to each group and make sure they understand what they are reading, that everyone is working together, and that they are prepared to share their information with the class. Examples of topics include:

a. home life
b. sports
c. education
d. vacations/leisure
e. religion

KO 3 KO 4 6. Teach a Russian folksong and dance, such as, "Boatmen of the Volga". Compare the sound and style of this song to an American folksong such as, "Oh Susanna". Explain that many folksongs are about a specific part of a country or a historical event that took place in that country. Therefore, folksongs from each country have a unique style and meaning familiar only to the people of that country. Ask students to name some other folksongs that are about a historical event or a certain region of the country. Since this song is about the Volga River, point out its location on a map. Discuss its importance in carrying both freight and passengers from the Soviet Union to parts of Europe.

KO 5 7. To learn about geographical features of the Soviet Union, provide each student with a map of the Soviet Union with relevant geographical features on it. The map should include the cities of Moscow

Leningrad, Vladivostok, and Kiev. The oceans and seas surrounding the Soviet Union should be included as well as the Ural Mountains, Yenisei River and the Volga River. On the board, draw the same map without any features included. Ask for volunteers to come up to the board and fill in the features, (based on their maps.) As each new feature is added, discuss its usefulness and characteristics before continuing. Afterwards, give students a worksheet which will review this information.

KO 2
SO 1 8. Divide the class into four or five small groups. Pass out an issue of the magazine Soviet Life and an issue of American Life to each group. Explain that the government of the Soviet Union sends Soviet Life out for Americans to read and learn about their country. Likewise, the American government sends American Life for the Soviet people to read. Ask if anyone remembers the difference between facts and opinions. After discussion, ask students to look through both magazines and find examples of facts and opinions. For example, if a headline in American Life says that baseball is the "great American pasttime" in our country, discuss how this is some peoples' opinions because they enjoy baseball immensely, while other people may have no interest in baseball whatsoever. Each group should find several examples of both facts and opinions while learning more about lifestyles in the Soviet Union.

KO 1 9. Write a letter to a Congressman describing our unit on the Soviet Union and our knowledge of their government compared to ours. Invite him/her to visit our class to discuss those differences in our governments which cause the rivalry and animosity. Ask him for suggestions

as to how we, as citizens can help achieve peace between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Closing Activities

KO 2 1. Divide the class into the groups they were in for the lesson on Soviet lifestyles. Gather as many Soviet Life magazines as possible. Divide the magazines evenly among the groups and ask them to find pictures which display the aspect of Soviet life each group studied. For example, the group which studied sports in the Soviet Union should find pictures which support the information they learned. Each group should find at least five representative pictures. In addition to this, each group will (cooperatively) write a summary of their topic. For example, the sports group would include the most popular sports in the Soviet Union, the relative skill of Russians in sports, and whether sports are encouraged or discouraged by the government. These pictures and summaries will be placed on a bulletin board in the classroom.

SO 2
AO 1 2. Hand back the papers students wrote the first day we discussed the Soviet Union. Ask students to consider their feelings now about the Soviet Union and its people. Based upon information gained during the unit about Soviet government, lifestyles, geography, and culture, students will write a paper, (approximately one page) describing whether or not their feelings have changed towards Soviet people and why they have or haven't changed. This is an assignment which will require careful thought; students should be given plenty of time to complete it.

KO 1-4
SO 3 3. Organize a treasure hunt to be conducted outside. At various points along the way to the treasure, the teacher will have questions about the Soviet Union which could be answered with

"Yes" or "No", "True" or "False". If a student answers a question correctly, he/she will be directed to a point where another question will await him. If he answers incorrectly, he will be diverted to a point where a message such as this would be posted: "Oops! You answered incorrectly. Return to the last question to find directions to the next point along the way to the treasure." All questions asked will be based upon information gained in class. For example, the teacher might make the statement, "The current leader of the Soviet Union is named Andropov. If true, go to the yellow trash can. If false, look under the bush with red berries to your left." The teacher should have a "treasure" of some sort for everyone who makes it to the treasure.

* If the class is large, there may need to be two or three treasure hunts!

Evaluation

Three main categories will comprise the basis for evaluation of students in this unit. They are:

1. Individual written work
2. Small group work
3. Whole class activities and discussions

There are four assignments which require individual written work. The quality of this work will determine 50% of the student's final unit grade. Constructive participation in small group work will make up 20% of the final grade. Since there is a strong focus on discussion and whole group activities, students' participation in these will determine the final 30% of their grade.

Individual written work

Students should have completed four written assignments at the end of the unit.

1. Paragraphs describing initial perceptions of people in the Soviet Union. *

SO 2 2. Paragraphs describing two similarities and two differences in lifestyles of the Soviet people compared to lifestyles of American people.

KO 3 3. Worksheets based on geographical features of the Soviet Union.

AO 2 4. Essays comparing students' initial perceptions of the Soviet people to perceptions at the end of the unit.

* This assignment will be graded only on the basis of completed/not completed.

Assignments two and four will be graded as follows:

		Very Little	Somewhat	Very Much
5 pts.	1. Reflects knowledge gained in the unit			
5 pts.	2. Shows originality			
5 pts.	3. Reflects time and thought			

Very Much = 5 pts. Somewhat = 3 pts. Very Little = 1 pt.

Assignment three will be graded as follows:

< or =

5 out of 10 questions answered correctly = 0 pts.
6 " " = 1 pt.
7 " " = 2 pts.
8 " " = 3 pts.
9 " " = 4 pts.
10 " " = 5 pts.

KO 2
SO 1

Small Group Work

Evaluation will be based mainly on teacher observation and assessment of assignments. Each person will be given same grade for assignments.

	Observation	All the time	Most of time	Few times
5 pts.	1. Student was a positive influence on the group			
5 pts.	2. Student contributed relevant information to the group			

	Assignment	Yes	Somewhat	No
5 pts.	1. Displays pictures representative of topic			
5 pts.	2. Summarization reflects careful consideration			
5 pts.	3. Summarization contains accurate information			

All the time or Yes = 5 pts. Most of the time or Somewhat = 3 pts.

Few times or No = 1 pt.

KO 1-4
SO 3

Whole Class Activities

Evaluation of participation in group discussion and class activities will be as follows:

		Always	Sometimes	Never
5 pts.	1. Volunteers relevant information in class discussions			
5 pts.	2. Pays attention to the teacher and other students during lesson			

Always = 5 pts. Sometimes = 3 pts. Never = 0 pts.

Participated in:		Yes	Somewhat	No
5 pts.	1. Cooking of Russian meal			
5 pts.	2. Treasure hunt			
5 pts.	3. Simulation of governments			
5 pts.	4. Singing and dancing of Russian folksong			
5 pts.	5. Map Activity			

Yes = 5 pts. Somewhat = 3 pts. No = 0 pts.

Final Grades

If a student's score is:

80% or greater of all points possible, he/she will receive a + for the unit.

65% - 79% " " √+ " "

50% - 64% " " √ " "

If, during the course of the unit the teacher finds a student's performance to be less than satisfactory, whe will have a conference with the student explaining her expectations for the rest of the unit.

References

1. Thayer, Charles W. and the Editors of LIFE. Russia, Time, Inc., New York; 1965, pp. 9-160.
This is an excellent teacher resource; it provided much background information for me and has excellent pictures, (although a little outdated).

2. Let's Travel in the Soviet Union, Children's Press, Inc., New York, New York; 1964, pp. 1-21; 53-54; 58-59. *
This book is great for children or adults. It provides information about people from all over the Soviet Union, as well as places of interest in major cities.

3. Resnick, Abraham. Enchantment of the World, RUSSIA: A History to 1917, Children's Press, Chicago; 1983, pp. 7-10.
Although readable for middle-upper elementary grade children, the content by itself is a little dry. However, it is a very up-to-date book and provides a lot of information for the teacher.

4. Resnick, Abraham. Enchantment of the World, The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Regensteiner Publishing Enterprises, Inc., Chicago; 1984, pp. 1-21; 45-98.
A very complete book which discusses nearly all aspects of this unit. It's readable for children and provides many recent photos. I wish each student could have had a copy of this during the unit.

5. Shapovalov, M. and Walsh, Warren B. Soviet Union. The Fideler Company, Grand Rapids, Mich.; 1958, pp. 35-52.
Although outdated, this book provides much information, especially on lifestyles in the Soviet Union. It is very readable for middle to upper elementary age children.

* There was no single author listed for this book.